

Municipal Council Meeting Minutes
June 21, 2005 7:00PM
Town Hall Auditorium

Pledge of Allegiance – Councilor Benson

Roll Call: Robert Woodsom, Roger Benson, James Chandler, Ann Connolly King, Esther Headley, Anne Larnard, Mario Pinierio and Joseph McMilleon

Christopher Lawrence arrived at 7:15

2005-57 FY05 Budget

President McMilleon reads 2005-57 into the record and opens the public hearing. He asks that people limit their comments to two minutes.

Thomas Schwartz, 285 Main Street, Amesbury High School Senior – Does not support cutting the school budget, it will be a detriment to the quality of education.

David Hildt, Mayor – Mr. Hildt call for civility and respect regardless of the out come of the budget hearing. State aide is at a historically low proportion to revenues needed to provide essential services. The budget presented is essentially level services and \$200,000 under the levy limit. The cuts made by the Finance Committee will make it impossible to maintain the current level of services in public safety and school departments.

Steven O'Connor, 3 Moody Street, Middle School Principal – Praises the quality of the Amesbury School System and does not support the cut to the School Budget, it would mean cuts to staff and programs.

Brian Smith, Middle Teacher – Does not support cut to the School budget, teachers are now being asked to pick up more of societies issues.

Dr. Chaurette, Superintendent of Schools – His challenge when he came to Amesbury was to take a good school system and make it great in a fiscally responsible way. The \$300,000 proposed cut will essentially mean there is really zero new money to be spent on the school budget from FY05. He states; this cut would kill them and make the task to make the school go from good to great that much more difficult and quite frankly impossible.

Tyler Ouellet, 8 Harrison Eaton Lane – Lack of teachers and staff has increased class size and supplies do not last for the whole year. There are not enough books to go around and the books they have are out dated or falling apart. He does not support a cut to the school budget.

Barbara Leary, 21 Vine Street – Math Department Chair, High School – The High School has seen a 20% reduction in staff in the last 3 years. Class sizes are getting too big; there are not enough teachers to teach all the classes. She does not have enough text books for at least 4 courses. Choice out also threatens the school budget. She does not support the cut to the school budget.

Ann Richardson, 10 Rowell Street – Budget cuts would mean larger class sizes, fewer qualified teachers and aids, higher athletic and extra curricular fees, transportation fees, loss of programs and in adequate supplies. She does not support the cut to the school budget.

Chief Bill Shute, Amesbury Fire Chief – Passes out report that shows why there are spikes in certain line items (attached). The Department can't afford to loose any staff fearing injuries will

happen. Five years ago the department went to ALS level paramedics. If there is a staff reduction there will be delays in service; the job will not be done as safely or efficiently as it has been done in the past. With the town growing as fast as it is, it will only get worse. He asks the council not to cut the Fire Department Budget.

Greg Rexford, President of Local 1783 – Disappointed the Finance Committee voted to cut \$170,000 from the budget without being educated on how the department operates, including overtime and, its long term financial goals. He feels that the cut will affect the staffing. The cut is damaging to the overall plan to save money and create a safer environment for the citizens.

Thomas Hanshaw, Amesbury Police Officer – Introduces Kelly Dunn

Kelly Dunn, Women's Crisis Center – Her agency would be concerned about any reduction to the APD. 34% of all the women they serve come from Amesbury. There is also a rise of child abuse. She asks the council to consider the needs of crime victims and families in crisis.

Curtis Wollftz, 91 South Hampton Rd. – Cuts to the School Department would contribute to lower test scores. Cuts to the Police budget would potentially increase the crime and injuries. Cuts to the Fire Department would increase response time and he urges the Council reconsider.

Jimmy Cuticchia – District VP for Professional Firefighters of Mass – The cut would immediately affect the staffing and would be devastating. He asks the Council to reconsider the cut.

Theresa Axten – Asks the Council to reconsider cutting the School budget. The classroom size has gone up to 27 – 29 students. The students have many needs and they have to be ready to pass the MCAS. Give the teachers what they need.

Jim Thieverge – Supports the schools and wants the cuts restored. He would also like to see the fees for athletics eliminated.

Pam Gilday, 25 Monroe Street – Praises the dedication and skill of the staff and teachers at AES. She is urging the Council to reconsider the \$300,000 cut that has been proposed to the schools.

David Nock, 15 Backriver Rd. – Retired Police Officer – Mr. Nock tells of his personal experience serving on the Amesbury police force in the 70's that he feels was short handed. He urges the Council not to cut the Police, Fire and School budgets.

Meryl Goldsmith, 8 Cleveland Street – Ms. Goldsmith reads letter she wrote to the paper. The increases in this budget have to do with fixed increases not enhancing education.

Todd Calderwood, 14 Spring St. – Suggests to sell the farm and build houses if that is a way to bring in more revenue.

Claude Gonthier, 112 Kimball Rd. – The private sector does not have high paying jobs for the majority of the people. He feels if you are retired or work in the private sector and health costs go up you have to find a way to pay for it, if you work for the government and the costs go up the town pays for it. He feels that the pay raises and benefits that the town workers get every year has got to stop as well as the new positions being created.

John Maynard, 2 Stuart St. – The spending has got to stop, it has continued since 1995. The town has got to live within its means.

John Bruno, 17 Field Street - Senior AHS - Teacher count has gone down, the books are getting worse since he has been a student at the High School. He does not support the cut to the school budget.

Margie Walentuk, School Nurse – Ms. Walentuk sees the teachers and staff give constantly with less every year and urges the council not to cut their budget. She urges the council not to cut the Police and Fire budgets.

Deb Bibeau, 17 Monroe Street – There are a lot of under funded or not funded federal mandates on school systems. She urges the Council to vote the recommend budget by the Mayor and not the Finance Committee.

Steven Robinson, 71 Prospect St. – Mr. Robinson has three children in the school system and does not support the cuts.

Stan Schwartz, 105 Highland Street – Mr. Schwartz would like the council to hold off for a year before deciding to make any cuts so everyone can work together. He also suggests that everyone that works for the town should consider a pay freeze.

James Potts, Precinct 3 - Mr. Potts does not support the cuts to the Fire and School Department budgets.

Michelle Thone, Director of the ATA – Ms. Thone fears the town could be heading for an override just to operate. She asks the two union contracts still in negotiations to look at the facts and think ahead.

Alex Fredette, 11 Pickard Street – Mr. Fredette does not support doing away with the ambulance service. The projected savings do not out weigh the benefits.

Mike Greaney, 50 Orchard Street – Mr. Greaney feels there should be a cap on wages especially administrators within the school departments. The senior citizens, young couples and the unemployed can not afford more taxes.

Gerard Dionne, 8 Huntington Ave. – Mr. Dionne would like the council to think outside the box to solve the financial problems.

Mike Cronin, Chief of Police – Chief Cronin points out the budget he submitted is approximately \$27,000 over last year's personnel section due to the School Resource officer. He then reads the log from the night when he was presenting the budget to the Finance Committee. He states that he doesn't think the council can appreciate the level of services that are needed in this town. The level of staffing in Amesbury is nowhere beyond excessive.

Sherrie Worthen, Dispatcher – Ms. Worthen has high praise for the school system and is concerned that the level excellence will not be there if there are cuts. She is a 911 dispatcher for

Amesbury Police and believes cuts to the Ambulance, Fire and Police will be devastating to this town.

Jim Bateman, Amesbury Fire Department – Mr. Bateman states that Amesbury Ambulance has the highest level of care for the residents and therefore does not support the budget cut.

Paul Knittle, 265 Lions Mouth Road – Mr. Knittle states that Amesbury has excellent teachers and wants them to be able to continue their good work; he does not support the cuts.

Patty Coffey, Amesbury – Ms. Coffey does not support the cuts to School, Fire and Police departments.

President McMilleon declares the public hearing closed and a 10 minute recess.

Police Department

The recommendation of the Finance Committee was to cut bottom line by \$125,000 and to fund at \$3,125,675.00

Councilor Benson moves the Finance Committee recommendation.
Councilor Pinierio second.

Councilor King states her concern about the increased costs associated with 10 hour shifts and suggests that the police, in their union negotiations, should keep that in mind. She does not want to see job cuts and would like to maintain the current level of services but clearly these are tough financial times.

Councilor Benson supports the budget reduction. He feels the department takes on grant positions and when the grants run out they want to fund to additional positions. The police department needs to staff in a responsible and sustainable way.

Councilor Chandler supports the budget cuts and would like to see changes to the 10 hour shift and the four days on and four days off rotation. He would like to see four days on and two days off that the police had prior to 1991.

Councilor Woodsom would like to see a public safety audit done on personnel procedures, staffing and daily operations. He would like to see this audit done and completed before the Police and Fire contracts are negotiated.

Councilor Larnard states that something has got to give; the town just does not have enough money. This budget is \$200,000 under the levy but that does not include police and fire raises which would bring the town very close to an override. The stabilization fund should be around \$2,000,000 for a town this size. There are long term problems that need to be addressed. She feels the level of state aid may go down because incomes have gone up. She is willing to compromise and does not support \$125,000 reduction instead the original amount of \$64,000.

Councilor Benson moves the Finance Committee recommendation to cut \$125,000 and fund at \$3,125,675.00
Councilor Pinierio second

Roll Call Vote – 5 Yes, 4 No (Woodsom, Headley, Larnard, McMilleon)

Fire Department

The recommendation of the Finance Committee is to cut \$170,000 and to fund the department at \$2,575,630.00.

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee to cut \$170,000
Councilor Chandler second

Councilor King states that the Fire budget has gone up about \$900,000 since 2001. She feels that the ambulance is not sustainable, it is consistently over budget. She is not calling for layoffs but wants to see every department step back and see if things can be run more efficient.

Councilor Benson states that a 6% increase over last year's budget is not sustainable and out of the question. He feels the schools have sustained layoffs in the last couple of budget cycles and now it is time to look at the municipal side. The municipal side has not had layoffs but has increased staff. He does support the \$170,000 cut.

Councilor Lawrence agrees with Councilor Benson that a 6% increase over last year's budget is unacceptable. He feels that the proposed \$600,000 decrease from the Mayor's budget increase of \$2.8 million is minor. He feels that more cuts should have been made prior to the Council receiving the budget.

Councilor Headley feels that part of the budget increases are due to gas, oil and electricity. She feels that in order to keep the town in the condition it is in we have to push all these budgets through.

Councilor Benson adds that a couple of years ago the town added 4 firefighters to cut overtime, it hasn't and has in fact cost the town.

Councilor Woodsom would like to see the overtime line item targeted.

Councilor Pinierio agrees that the overtime budget is out of sight and needs to be stopped.

Councilor Larnard feels an audit of the ambulance is a good idea. She doesn't support taking \$170,000, it is unrealistic and the Department could tap into the ambulance fund.

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee to cut \$170,000
Councilor Chandler second

Roll Call Vote – 4 Yes, 5 No (Woodsom, King, Headley, Larnard, McMilleon)
Motion Fails

Councilor Woodsom motion to fund line item 513100 at a level of 0 and fund 513101 at a level of 0 total cut of \$100,000
Councilor King second

Councilor Benson feels targeting a line item would be a mistake

Councilor Woodsom amends his motion to read fund Part 1 \$2,208,060
Councilor King second

Councilor Benson again feels it is a mistake to take from Part 1 and not the bottom line; allow them the flexibility.

Councilor Woodsom amends his motion again to read fund bottom line department 220 \$2,645,630.00 a \$100,000 deduction from the total department.

Councilor King second

Councilor Pinierio asks Mike Basque how much is spent to date on regular and ambulance overtime Mr. Basque responds \$83,000 and \$106,000.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yes, 3 No (Chandler, Pinierio, McMilleon)

School Department

The Finance Recommendation recommended cutting \$300,000 from the bottom line, funding at \$21,113,233.00.

Councilor Benson moves to fund at the Mayor's recommendation of \$21,413,233
Councilor King second

Councilor Benson feels the council has not done their jobs and cut enough on the Municipal side, 6% is not acceptable it should be closer to 2 or 3%. He believes if the budget is cut, teachers will be laid off.

Councilor Pinierio feels administrator raises would be better spent on new books.

Councilor King speaks in support of the schools. The last three years they have taken the cuts and she does not feel that they are top heavy in administration. An audit of the superintendents' office recommended an Assistant Superintendent. She asks that the council support the Mayor's recommendation.

Councilor Chandler feels the personnel costs including salaries and benefits in the union contracts have sky rocketed and the people who negotiated had no real concern for the taxpayers of this town. He will not support the Mayor's recommendation.

Councilor Lawrence feels the Mayor should have done a better job and if the budget is cut it is the Mayor doing.

Councilor Woodsom does support the Mayor's recommendation to fully fund the school. He reminds everyone that the Mayor did cut a lot out of the budget.

Councilor Benson moves to fund at the Mayor's recommendation of \$21,413,233
Councilor King second

Roll Call Vote 5 Yes, 4 No (Chandler, Larnard, Lawrence, Pinierio)

Municipal Council

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$69,850.00

Councilor Lawrence moves the recommendation of Finance Committee

Councilor Woodsom second

Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Mayor

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$173,109.00

Councilor Chandler moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee

Councilor Pinierio second

Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Reserve Funds

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$50,000.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee

Councilor Pinierio second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Administration & Finance

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$262,046.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee

Councilor Chandler second

Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (King)

Assessor

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$207,834.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee

Councilor Pinierio second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Recess 10:10

Council on Aging

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$131,094.60

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee

Councilor Lawrence second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Collector/Treasurer

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$186,152.75

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Legal

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$100,000

Councilor Benson motions to fund the bottom line at \$25,000
Councilor Pinierio second

Councilor Lawrence would like to see the legal budget funded at 1/12th the Finance Committee recommendation.

Councilor Benson wants legal services sent out to bid but, by funding at \$25,000 it does not handicap the first couple of months of the new fiscal year.

Councilor Pinierio states that the Mayor should come to the Council to overspend any budget.

Councilor Benson motions to fund the bottom line at \$25,000.00
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 5 Yes, 4 No (Woodsom, King, Headley, Larnard)

Management Information Systems

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$249,705.11

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Lawrence second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Central Supply

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$55,000

Councilor Chandler moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor King second
Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Town Clerk

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$133,245.17

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Elections

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$25,350.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Liquor Commission

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$1,000.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Conservation Commission

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$31,286.23

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Community & Economic Development

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$453,471.21

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor King second
Roll Call Vote: 9 Yes

Planning Board

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$25,850.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Board of Appeals

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$18,546.62

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Municipal Buildings

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$71,000.00

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Senior Center Buildings

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$16,500.00

Councilor Chandler moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor Pinierio second
Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Building Inspection

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$168,212.49

Councilor Benson moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee
Councilor King second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Weights & Measures

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves to fund at the Mayor's recommendation of \$4,500.00
Councilor King second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Emergency Management

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves to fund at the Mayor's recommendation \$39,330.00
Councilor Lawrence second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Harbormaster

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves to fund at the Mayor's recommendation of \$7,500.00
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 9 – Yes

Department of Public Works

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$1,319,939.00

Councilor King moves to accept the Mayor's budget \$1,319,939.00
Councilor Larnard second

Councilor Benson believes that \$100,000 plus could be saved.

Councilor Larnard states that the majority of calls she receives is for DPW or infrastructure. The Mayor has already cut the DPW budget and she fully supports this budget.

Councilor King states her support of this budget and praises the DPW for their good work.

Councilor Chandler states that the DPW has done a fantastic job and supports this budget.

Councilor King moves to accept the Mayor's budget \$1,319,939.00
Councilor Larnard second
Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Engineering

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation \$99,492.00
Councilor Benson second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Snow & Ice

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$128,000.00
Councilor Benson second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Outdoor Lighting

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$140,000.00
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Refuse/Recycling

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$794,750.00
Councilor Benson second

Councilor Pinierio asks Mr. Basque why the budget went up and he explains that it was a negotiated increase.

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Health Department

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$180,751.00.
Councilor King second
Roll Call Vote – 7 Yes, 2 No (Benson, Pinierio)

Councilor King moves to accept the Mayor's budget \$1,319,939.00
Councilor Larnard second

Veterans Services

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$106,140.31
Councilor Benson second
Roll Call Vote – 9 yes

Library

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$543,517.00

Councilor King moves the Mayor's recommendation of \$543,517.00
Councilor Larnard second

Councilor Larnard clarifies some misinformation from public comment about adding a position. The Reference Librarian was promoted to the position of Assistant Department Head and the Reference Librarian was not funded.

Roll Call Vote – 7 Yes, 2 No (Benson, Pinierio)

Celebrations

Councilor Pinierio makes a formal request to the Mayor to fund \$5,000.00 towards the fireworks and Amesbury Days.

Councilor Chandler second

Voted – 5 Yes, 4 No

Debt Services

No recommendation from Finance.

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$2,678,119.00

Councilor King second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Other Assessments

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$992,122.00

Councilor Benson second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Employee Benefits

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$3,608,632.00

Councilor Benson second

Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Insurance Expense

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$357,300.00

Councilor Benson second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Landry Stadium

No recommendation from Finance

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$10,000.00
Councilor Benson second
Roll Call Vote – 9 Yes

Sewer Department

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$2,464,553.42

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Mayor \$2,464,553.42 on the grounds that it is a new plant and we are not sure of the operating costs.
Councilor Chandler second
Roll Call Vote – 7, Yes – 2, No (Benson, Pinierio)

Water Department

Finance Committee recommendation: fund at \$2,484,665.30

Councilor Woodsom moves the recommendation of the Finance Committee.
Councilor King
Roll Call Vote – 7 Yes, 2 No (Benson, Pinierio)

Recess

Councilor Benson moved that the Municipal Council of the Town of Amesbury hereby approve the FY 2006 operating budget for a total appropriation of: \$40,545,883.49

That to fund said appropriation, the Municipal Council approves \$39,900,783.49 to be raised by taxation and other revenue sources and further that \$645,100.00 be applied from the sources detailed below:

Sale of Cemetery Lots	\$13,900.00
Ambulance Receipts	\$452,000.00
Youth Revolving	\$153,000.00
Cemetery Trust	\$26,200.00

Further voted that the Municipal Council approves the following enterprise fund budgets:

Landry Stadium	\$ 10,000.00
Sewer Department	\$2,464,553.42
Water Department	\$2,484,665.30

TOTAL RECOMMENDED APPROPRIATION \$ 45,505,102.21

Councilor Woodsom seconded

Roll Call Vote – 5 Yes (Woodsom, King, Headley, Larnard, McMilleon), 4 No (Benson, Chandler, Lawrence, Pinierio)

SECOND READINGS

2005-65 An Order to provide for salary increases for the Mayor and City Councilors – Councilor Lawrence sponsor

President McMilleon reads 2005-65 into the record

Councilor Lawrence moves to accept 2005-65 as submitted.

Councilor Chandler seconded

Councilor Lawrence explains that he wants the Mayor and Councilor's salary brought in line with the surrounding communities and other department heads.

Councilor Benson agrees that the Council and the Mayor should make more money but can't support this bill right now. He feels the automatic increases built into the bill will have ramifications down the road and there has not been enough time to discuss that. He will be voting against 2005-65.

Councilor Headley feels it is a poor time to suggest the increase. She feels this was put forward to help people to decide whether or not they want to run for office. She does not support this bill.

Councilor Larnard feels this is poor timing especially where four people just voted against the budget and now they are asking for raises.

Councilor Chandler states that although he did second the motion feels this is not the right time and would like to see it pushed forward to FY07 or FY08.

Roll Call Vote – 1 Yes, 8 No (Woodsom, Benson, Chandler, King, Headley, Larnard, Pinierio, McMilleon)

Councilor Benson motion to adjourn

Councilor King seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Assistant Town Clerk